

Columns

The Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields
Registered Charity 276056

Columns is the supporter's bulletin for the Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields.

The Friends are leading the restoration of Nicholas Hawksmoor's church, regarded as one of the most important Baroque churches in Europe. This project will take several years.

Please support us by subscribing or making a donation. Use the coupon sent with this newsletter or telephone 0171-247 0165.

Steeplejacks assess the damage

As Spitalfields Festival concert-goers approached Christ Church this summer, many noticed ladders perched precariously 180 feet up the spire. For earlier in the day, steeplejacks equipped with mountaineering gear had been aloft as part of a major survey of the tower and spire, paid for by the Friends.

Working at giddy heights, and supported only by abseiling belts for much of the operation, the steeplejacks meticulously assessed and photographed the condition of the stonework. Though there had been some rebuilding of the spire in the nineteenth century, after the tower was twice struck by lightning, much of its fabric has essentially been untouched since the early eighteenth century. The report is now being considered by Whitfield Partners, the architects for the restoration, but the photographs show shocking examples of decay, some of which will need urgent attention on safety grounds alone.



Other repairs to be put in hand will also prevent the dire effects of weathering, which is always worse when rain and frost can get through cracks and joints. On a recent tour of inspection of the roof, Red Mason, the architect in charge, discovered a substantial piece of masonry which had fallen from the tower onto the copper roof. Not only does the stone weather and decay through the effects of London's polluted atmosphere, but also the iron cramps which were used to secure the huge blocks of Portland stone have rusted badly in exposed parts of the structure, causing cracks and spalls with potentially catastrophic results.

The survey was carried out by the family firm of Harkness, from Petersfield, in Hampshire, who are specialists in surveying church towers and other such tall and inaccessible structures. The costs were met entirely by the Friends of Christ Church. The results of the survey will form a key part of the evidence to be presented to English Heritage in support of the Friends' application for grant aid to help secure the church's external masonry. The estimated cost of repairs to the stonework of the tower, spire and roof parapets is over £500,000.



Sir James Stirling memorial

The west vestibule and entrance doors to Christ Church will be restored to their original state, in memory of the distinguished architect Sir James Stirling (1926-92), *left*, who so admired the church and its architect. As a student he would cycle round the East End, to visit Hawksmoor's churches and analyse their qualities.

The fund for these new works derives from donations made in lieu of flowers at Sir James' funeral, and from donations made in his memory and at the memorial service which Lord Palumbo organized.

"The Stirling memorial will give a completely different feel on entering the church – no longer one of delapidation and Victorian dowdiness", says the Campaign Director and local resident Roland Jeffery. "The restoration links two great British architectural geniuses in a most appropriate way." The existing Victorian entrance doors will be removed, and the original Georgian doors set in their proper position, so enlarging the vestibule, regaining its original dimensions and flooding the west end with light as Hawksmoor intended.

The Friends hope to do the work in time for next year's Spitalfields Festival. Unfortunately, a promised large donation was not in the event forthcoming, so work is on hold until a further £15,000 can be raised.

Donations for this work are therefore urgently needed.

- £800 will install a brass lantern for the vestibule.
- £1500 is needed to move the Victorian memorial stones to a more suitable place, so that the original doors may be returned to their proper location.
- £2500 will repair the uneven and damaged stone floor.

Thank You

Our campaign to restore Christ Church relies on gifts of time, money and talents. Recently we have had cause to thank:

- Spitalfields cabinetmaker Jim Howett, who made a new display case and lighting for our model of the restoration of Christ Church.
- Spitalfields resident and Friends' Treasurer Eric Elstob, who invited friends to make donations to restoration funds in lieu of gifts at his 50th birthday, thereby raising over £3000.
- Spitalfields Festival, for publicizing the restoration appeal.
- The Cromarty Trust for its generous contribution to the Stirling memorial works in the vestibule (see the next feature).
- Sir Hugh Casson, for his limited edition of signed prints of Christ Church, now available from the Friends' office (see the item below).
- Bowne of London, the local branch of the world's largest financial printers, for reprinting the Friends membership leaflets.
- Fund managers Foreign & Colonial Group, based in Broadgate, for donations made under covenant for five years.
- Fay Cattini, who typed Friends' subscription details into the computer system.

Wanted

- **Volunteers.** We need help in the Friends' office at Christ Church one day a week. We have jobs in and out of the office to suit all kinds of volunteers.
- **Teas.** We need someone to organize teas at Friends' events.
- **Photocopying.** If your company can assist us by providing occasional photocopying facilities, please let us know. Please telephone the Friends' office on 0171-247 0165 if you can help.

If you would like to contribute to the Stirling memorial, please send your cheque to 'The Friends of Christ Church', indicating you wish the donation to be allocated to this project. The names of all donors will be recorded in a future issue of **Columns**, and donors giving £100 or more will be invited to a reception after the inauguration.

Spitalfields Festival 1995

After the hugely successful 1994 Festival in Christ Church, when ticket sales broke Festival records, the dates have been announced for the 1995 Festival: 7 to 28 June. Programme planning is well advanced. To take advantage of early booking concessions, become a Festival Friend. Phone 0171-377 0494 for details.

In Memoriam

J. H. V. Davies (1921-93), usually known as Vaughan Davies, was a distinguished civil servant who was also a pioneer in the appreciation of Hawksmoor and his works. After war service in the RAF, Vaughan Davies entered the Ministry of Agriculture where he spent his career, rising to become Deputy Secretary in 1979. His passion was architecture. He was a founding Patron of the Friends of Christ Church. In the 1950s and 60s he pioneered some areas of research into both Hawksmoor and Wren's building activities, opening up new archival sources, and he, together with Wayland Young (now Lord Kennet) promoted the important 1962 Arts Council exhibition at St James' Square on Hawksmoor in which contributed considerably to the architect's critical re-evaluation.

Miss E.M. Gadsden, of White-chapel, latterly a resident of Toynbee Hall, left half her estate towards the restoration of Christ Church.

Bishop lends support

The Rt Revd Richard Chartres, Bishop of Stepney, has most kindly agreed to become a Patron of the Friends.

With his acknowledged interest in buildings and their care, he accepted the invitation "with real enthusiasm... Christ Church is both an architectural gem and an extremely strategic place for Christian worship in the East End."

The Friends talk to English Heritage

The Friends of Christ Church have recently submitted a major application to English Heritage for grant aid towards essential repair works to the fabric, as an important plank in the restoration campaign.

The application is based on detailed survey and assessment work by Whitfield Partners, architects to the restoration, including the recent steeplejack survey (see the lead item above). The Friends have paid for the survey work and the architects' fees for the preparation of the case in the application to English Heritage.

Eleanor Murray, the Friends' Chairman, stresses the importance of pursuing every avenue of approach to the costs of restoration. "As well as seeking donations from individuals, foundations and companies, the Friends have always recognised the need to maximize statutory grant support for the restoration of Christ Church. We are currently in discussion with English Heritage officers over the extent of works eligible for funding. I hope it will amount to a substantial sum."

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Editor: David Souden

Personal Column

In each issue we include a personal appreciation of Christ Church. The late Ian Nairn, one of the most perceptive and combative of architectural writers, memorably described Christ Church in its sad days of disuse in the 1960s, in *Nairn's London* (Penguin, 1966).

Mighty. Hawksmoor's biggest and grandest church, all built up on the scheme of the Venetian arch – three-part, with the centre higher than the wings. But not 'composed'; transmuted somewhere right down in the blood so that the whole building becomes a living idea... Centre and wings in the huge porch, in the relation of belfry to steeple; and overwhelmingly inside: aisles to centre space, division of the chancel screen, the actual Venetian window at the east end: everything offered up: to God be the praise. Locked up whilst money is being collected for a restoration; if the Church lets it fall down it might as well present a banker's order for thirty pieces of silver. For here is the faith, manifest.

What your help means

Restoring Christ Church is a major undertaking. The Friends are working to maximize the amount of statutory grant available, but the restoration also requires the help of countless individuals, trusts and companies. Here are examples.

- £750 will reinstate the original Georgian security gate on the tower staircase.
- £1200 will pay for the anti-pigeon devices recently installed over the porch. Pigeon droppings have been a major cause of damage to the fabric.
- £1300 will pay for the photographic survey of the tower and spire by the steeplejacks which was described in the opening item.

Signed Casson prints offer

A signed limited edition of lithographs of Christ Church by Sir Hugh Casson PPRA is now available to Friends. Sir Hugh generously donated the edition to the Friends for the restoration funds.

A special offer price is available to subscribers placing early orders.

The edition is just of fifty prints, and priority will be given to Friends subscribing to the edition. Prints are £125 unframed, and £160 mounted, framed in handsome, professionally-made ash surrounds. Phone the Friends office on 071-247 0165 to reserve a print, leaving a day-time phone number. *Orders received before 10 October 1994 will qualify for a discount: unframed prints may be purchased for £100, framed prints for £135.* Any prints which have not been sold to Friends will be sold direct to the public and through galleries.

The prints will make ideal gifts for Christmas. Allow 3 weeks for delivery of unframed prints. Framed prints must be collected by arrangement from Christ Church.

Forthcoming Events

Roger White's illustrated lecture on *Georgian Gothic[k]*, to be delivered in Christ Church on 31 October, at 6 pm, promises to be a delight.

The Society of Royal Cumberland Youths will demonstrate bell-ringing on 10 November, at 5.30 for 6 pm. Places are limited; booking is essential.

Tickets for each of these events are £5 to Friends, £6 public.

The candle-lit Community Carol Service, in Christ Church on 15 December at 5.30 pm, with the Bishop of Stepney and the Mayor of Tower Hamlets in attendance, will be a festive and joyous occasion. All welcome.